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IDENTIFIERS Cardinal Principles Report

ABSTRACT

A histcrical review cf the institutienal beginnings of the Commission on the Reorganizatien of Seccndary Educatien frcm 1912-21 is presented, with emphasis cn the Ccmmissicn's objectives to help the American high school become a better instrument cf democracy and reflect the highest ideals of American life. In 1921, when this report was written, the Commission consisted of 16 committees and a reviewing committee. The reviewing committee had a twcfcld function. The first function was tc formulate furdamental principles to guide the reorganization of secondary educatien. Its cenclusicns in this field were issued in a bulletin entitled "Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education." The second functicn cf the reviewing committee was to criticize reports submitted to it by the varicus ccmmittees. By 1921, the commission had issued 12 reports dating back to 1915. Subject areas dealt with in these reports include: civics, social studies, English, music, physical education, mcral values, vccaticnal guidance, business education, the Cardinal Principles Report, mathematics, science, and agriculture. At the time this report was written the commission hoped to issue fcur reports dealing with part-time education, high schocl grcunds and buildings, classical languages, and the reorganization of hcme ecencmics. In fcrmulating the aims of secondary education, the ccmmissicn selected seven objectives: health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home membership, vocation, citizenship, worthy use cf leisure, and ethical character. The commission also took a pcsitien cn schcol admission, broadened its cencepticns of seccndary educatien tc include junior high schools, and embraced the comprehensive high schccl.
(Author/JK)

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OF THE UNITED STATES

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OF THE

FIFTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE REORGANIZATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

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It is generally recognized that the American high school is unique among the secondary schools of the world. A few of its characteristics are accidental, but as an institution it reflects some of the finest and deepest and truest ideals of American life. To assist the American high school to become an even better instrument of democracy, the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education was organized by the National Education Association nine years ago, and has been at work continuously ever since.

Why is there need for a national commission in this field? State associations and regional associations, such as the North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges, are achieving important results. Cannot these associations alone accomplish all that is needed? We believe that the experience of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education demonstrates conclusively the desirability, nay more the necessity, for national committees composed of representatives from all parts of the country. Without such national committees there is danger that our educational procedures will diverge unnecessarily and unwisely.

The commission consists of sixteen committees, and a reviewing committee composed of the chairmen of the sixteen committees and ten members at large. The total membership of the committees exceeds two hundred persons and represents thirty states.

The Reviewing committee has a twofold function. It formulates the fundamental principles which it believes should guide the reorganization of secondary education. Its conclusions in this field have been issued in a bulletin entitled *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*. Its second function is to criticize reports submitted to it by the various committees. As a result of its criticism some of the reports have been revised or even entirely rewritten three or four times. In several fields, the committees have been reorganized, since the original committees were unable to work out their problems. This work of

thorough and painstaking criticism has made it necessary for the reviewing committee to hold from one to three meetings each year, each meeting lasting several days. The policy of insisting upon reports consistent with sound educational principles has made it impossible for the commission to issue more than two to four reports in any one year.

Up to the present time the commission has completed thirteen reports, twelve of which have been issued by the United States Bureau of Education, and the thirteenth is now in the hands of the printer. The first report was issued in 1915 and dealt with the teaching of community civics. That report has been widely influential in shaping the content and method of one of the newest and most valuable subjects in secondary education. Nearly every recent textbook in this field shows the influence of this report. In 1916 a report was issued on the social studies in secondary education. This report was reprinted in the *History Teachers' Magazine* and has shaped several of the textbooks in European history and in the problems of democracy.

In 1917 four reports were issued dealing with English, music, physical education, and moral values. The report on English, which was prepared by a joint committee representing not only the commission but also the National Council of Teachers of English, has been widely adopted as the basis of courses in English and has been indorsed by the North Central Asociation of Secondary Schools and Colleges as the standard both for high-school work and for admission to college.

In 1918 and 1919 three reports were issued dealing with vocational guidance, business education, and the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*. Three reports bearing the date of 1920 deal with mathematics, science, and agriculture.

The science report entitled *Reorganization of Science in Secondary Schools* contains the contributions of a committee of forty-seven members. Its issuance was preceded by lengthy discussions and controversies that were almost bitter at times. The report is, however, now acceptable to practically all the disputants and represents a point of view which is both moderate and progressive.

The twelve reports already issued vary in length from twenty-four to 181 pages and if bound in a single volume would constitute 611 pages. They represent, however, several times that amount of material, as many of them were rewritten time and time again.

The total distribution of these reports already exceeds 200,000 copies. The Bureau has distributed practically the full number that it is allowed by law to distribute free. Additional copies are being printed and sold by the Superintendent of Documents. State departments of education and city superintendents of schools are purchasing reports in quantities and distributing them to high school principals and teachers.

The Superintendent of Documents is co-operating in this distribution by selling the bulletins in quantities at special cost rates.

The commission hopes to issue in the near future four reports dealing respectively with part-time education of various types, High School Grounds and Buildings, Classical Languages, and Reorganization of Home Economics.

In the brief time available it will be possible to mention only a few of the most important conclusions and recommendations of the commission. Many of these are contained in its report entitled *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education.*

The commission emphasizes, throughout all its reports, the importance of a clear conception and statement of the aims of secondary education as a whole and of each subject and of each activity within the school. The selection of methods and the organization of content cannot wisely be made until the aims are accurately determined. No subject can retain its place in education unless it contributes to aims that are socially valid.

In attempting to formulate the aims of secondary education, the commission has selected seven objectives which it holds should determine the organization, administration, and supervision of the school, the subjects to be taught, the methods of instruction and the extra-classroom activities. Their objectives are: (1) health, (2) command of fundamental processes, (3) worthy home membership, (4) vocation, (5) citizenship, (6) worthy use of leisure, (7) ethical character.

"This commission holds that education is essentially a unitary and continuous process, and that each of the objectives defined above must be recognized throughout the entire extent of secondary education. Health needs are evidently important at all stages; the vocational purpose and content is coming properly to be recognized as a necessary and valuable ingredient even in the early stages and even when specific preparation is postponed; citizenship and the worthy use of leisure, obviously important in the earlier stages, involve certain phases of education that require maturity on the part of the pupil and hence are indispensable also in the later stages of secondary education.

Furthermore, it is only as the pupil sees his vocation in relation to his citizenship and his citizenship in the light of his vocation that he will be prepared for effective membership in an industrial democracy. Consequently, this commission enters its protest against any and all plans, however well intended, which are in danger of divorcing vocation and social-civic education. It stands squarely for the infusion of vocation with the spirit of service and for the vitalization of culture by genuine contact with the world's work."

The commission takes an advanced position with regard to the admission of students to the secondary school. It holds that "the secondary school should admit, and provide suitable instruction for all pupils who are in any respect so mature that they would derive more benefit from the secondary school than from the elementary school." This position throws into the discard the last vestige of the idea that abstract standards are more important than the needs of actual boys and girls.

The commission also recognizes the necessity of rendering some service to those boys and girls who go to work before completing the secondary-school course. It has a report now in the hands of the printer dealing with *Part-time Education of Various Types.* The commission holds that "a sound national policy dictates the urgent need for legislation whereby all young persons, whether employed or not shall be required to attend school not less than eight hours in each week that schools are in session until they reach the age of eighteen.

"Attendance for eight hours in each week will make possible important progress not only in vocational efficiency but also in the promotion of health, preparation for worthy home-membership, civic intelligence and efficiency, the better utilization of leisure, and ethical development. All these objectives are evidently as important for the young worker as for those who remain in full-time attendance at school."

Even before the issuance of its first report the Commission broadened its conception of secondary education to include the junior high school period. Its reports are so organized as to be of assistance to the work in grades VII and VIII even in school systems where these grades have not as yet been incorporated into a junior high school or a six-year high school.

In discussing the various types of secondary schools now found in the United States, the commission takes the position that the *comprehensive high school,* embracing all curriculums in one unified organization, should be encouraged. The principal of the comprehensive high school must be a man of broad sympathies for whom democracy is a ruling passion.

In concluding its report on the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education,* the commission states:

"It is becoming increasingly apparent that the problems of secondary education merit much more serious attention than they have received heretofore. The study of the best methods for adapting secondary education to the needs of modern democratic life is but begun. The physical, intellectual, emotional, and ethical characteristics of young people are still but vaguely comprehended. Such knowledge of social needs and educational theory and practice as is already available has been seriously studied by comparatively few administrators and teachers. Progress will depend very largely upon adequate professional training of teachers both before and after entering upon service. Plans must be adopted for pooling the results of successful experimentation on the part of individual teachers. To make the reorganization effective, competent supervision and constructive leadership must be provided in the various fields of secondary education.

It is the firm belief of this commission that secondary education in the United States must aim at nothing less than complete and worthy living for all youth, and that therefore the objectives described herein must find place in the education of every boy and girl.

Finally, in the process of translating into daily practice the cardinal principles herein set forth, the secondary school teachers of the United States must themselves strive to explore the inner meaning of the great democratic

movement now struggling for supremacy. The doctrine that each individual has a right to the opportunity to develop the best that is in him is reinforced by the belief in the potential, and perchance unique, worth of the individual. The task of education, as of life, is therefore to call forth that potential worth.

While seeking to evoke the distinctive excellencies of individuals and groups of individuals, the secondary school must be equally zealous to develop those common ideas, common ideals, and common modes of thought, feeling, and action, whereby America, through a rich, unified, common life, may render her truest service to a world seeking for democracy among men and nations."